

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LIEUTENANT COLONEL KEN ADGIE,
COMMANDER, 1ST BATTALION, 30TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION,
MULTINATIONAL DIVISION CENTER, VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ DATE: THURSDAY,
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CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): Okay.
Lieutenant Colonel Ken Adgie is with us for the bloggers roundtable this
morning, commander of the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, the 3rd
Infantry Division, Multinational Division Center.

Sir, welcome to the bloggers roundtable, and do you have an opening
statement for us?

LT. COL. ADGIE: I do. Before we get started, I'd just ask, for the
moderator, I hear you loud and clear, and for some of the guys, pretty good, but
for some other ones, I'd ask if you'd just speak up when it comes time for the
questions, because I -- just a little soft.

Good morning to all the panel. Thank you for taking the time to
participate in this discussion. I have a brief opening statement. Then I'd
welcome your questions.

Just a little background on our operation. Arab Jabour is about 10
miles from the IZ, straight-line distance. It is along the Tigris River Valley.
It is mainly an agrarian area. The terrain is defined by thick palm groves;
lots of canals, both large, wide ones and smaller ones; and then dirty, dusty
roads.

The population is about 99.8 percent Sunni. Out of that, it's about 95
percent of one tribe, the al-Jaburi tribe.

There is no Iraqi army here, there is no Iraqi police here, and
there's no governmental structure here. Before the surge started, there was --
the last coalition force present was about 18 months ago. So you combine, you
know, rugged terrain, Sunni, no governmental structure or law enforcement here,
and what you had was a petri dish for al Qaeda to grow. The al Qaeda that's
here is not guys -- you know, bad guys from Syria or, you know, Somalia. They
are local people that grew up here, and from what we've learned about them, they
are -- they were bad teenagers who stole cars, and what they have done is, the
allure of fast money from al Qaeda, they joined al Qaeda, and they carry out al
Qaeda's bidding.

And what has happened in the last 18 months or so here is the enemy has used ultraviolence against the locals to strike fear in their heart, and then they limited resources to people -- and resources, I mean food, water and electricity -- to control behavior. And that was kind of their methodology that allowed them to -- allowed al Qaeda to flourish here. It's just a difficult place to get into, and they carried out their bad ways and were able to build the VBIEDs or things like that to be pushed into Baghdad.

Task Force 130, as part of the last surge brigade into Iraq, as part of General Petraeus' plan, we began Marne Torch 1 on the 16th of June 2007, and we began -- we entered this area and began clearing buildings methodically from north to south. We established Patrol Base Murray here. It's actually in the home of Uday and Qusay's weekend retreat home, which makes it sound real nice, but it was -- it's a fairly decent home that overlooks the Tigris. We made this our base. We continue to push south. Our mission was to block the movement of accelerants into Baghdad, and so we sat astride the two main roads that run north into Baghdad to prevent the enemy from moving accelerants, people and weapons against Baghdad.

We've done okay. We've done pretty good. As the summer went along, we started building the confidence of the people, and they started providing just a lot of information on who the bad guys were. In early August, we started to see the first of the concerned citizens step forward. We are very fortunate to have a fellow named Brigadier General Mustafa, who is a retired one-star from the old Iraqi army, who decided enough is enough, "I'll be the leader" and stepped up -- stepped up to the light of day and helped us recruit this concerned citizen organization.

We started the first day with about 87, and then now seven weeks later, we're up to about 538. They are just folks from the villages, men from the villages, who are helping us secure the area. And they're really helping us to secure some critical infrastructure -- mosques, schools, water pump stations, key intersections.

But more -- the most important thing they provide is information. Al Qaeda operates in the veil -- under a veil of secrecy. No one knows who al Qaeda is. Well, that's no longer possible when the guy you went to high school with is a concerned citizen, and he can look you in the eye and say, "You're al Qaeda." And so what we've seen since early August is a very rapid process of detaining people who are walking right by us. The local people are writing sworn statements with the last sentence being, "I will testify in court against this man," about some of their heinous crimes. And so it's worked out exceptionally well.

And we have been able to allow the concerned citizens to take over some terrain that we operate less in. I don't want to say we turn it over to them, but as we continue to push further south, they are able to ensure al Qaeda doesn't flow back into some areas. And they're doing a very good job. It has not been cost-free for them; they have hit IEDs also, they have been killed by al Qaeda. But they are standing up, and it's a great thing to see.

Marne Torch II started on the 16th of September. And that is a continuation of our base mission: block accelerants into Baghdad, secure the population, and kill or detain those who want to incite sectarian violence, which in our case is al Qaeda.

So for the last two weeks, we've been building a new patrol base farther south into an area that we had not yet gone to, a place called Patrol Base Hawkes, named after a Medal of Honor winner in the 30th Regiment, just like PB Murray is. And it has been put up pretty quick, and it's looking pretty good.

And we are continuing to disrupt the enemy's operation. What we don't want to do is give him the opportunity to catch his breath. So we'll continue to push south. The new patrol base sits right astride a couple of his secondary LOCs, and we're able to project power from there, project formations even deeper south. So we're using the Army aviation to protect combat forces south, and then we can sustain ground movement into previously uncovered areas.

This Marne -- the concerned citizen/Marne Torch II is not just about fighting and killing in security operations. I just want to highlight a couple of other things that are going on -- happening here. The big -- the other big piece that General Mustafa has worked real hard with the coalition forces -- and more importantly, with other Iraqis -- is the stuff people need, quite frankly.

He has reached across to the Shi'as, which are not in the local area but 10, 15 kilometers away where he has friends and coordinated with them, and they have pushed food, supplies, water, propane, which is used for cooking, to their Sunni friends in need. And it's great to see. It truly is great to see. Normal Iraqis don't call themselves Shi'a or Sunnis, the folks who are out here, anyway; they are Iraqis. And so they don't have that bias that we read a lot about in the paper, which is good to see.

General Mustafa's also helped organize what is the -- we'd probably call it a district level, but a council, a governing council, so we can plug back into the government of Iraq and to the district and county seats in American language. For us, it's been nahiya and the qadha, which is below the provincial level; we fall under the province of Baghdad. All of those pipelines have been cut over the years, so we're trying to plug back in, and it's kind of working.

We probably have the best electricity in Iraq. That -- I don't know that we have great electricity. We're 20 hours a day, sometimes 24 hours a day for several days at a time, which is not the norm here. And I'm not sure why, but we're pretty happy about it. (Laughter.)

We're getting the water pumps, which pushes water from the Tigris through these canals all the way -- you know, 20 to 30 kilometers away. Those will now be back in operation. Not working great, but it's enough to get the farmers' fields 10, 15, 20 kilometers away the water.

And we are continuing to try to plug back in. General Mustafa has had several meetings with -- (inaudible) -- he's had a meeting with him, said, "What can I do to help?" Lieutenant General Abood, who's in charge of the Baghdad security, came down to visit on another day and said, "How can I help?" And, you know, we haven't seen a whole lot of tangible results -- those meetings were only about 10 days ago -- but it's a start.

So that's the way ahead -- governance, getting the infrastructure started -- that's all been possible because a serious situation is improving. A lot of work to do. We're still pushing further south, and the goal is to, you know, continuing to secure the population so more people can join the consensus

and secure themselves. But that's really Marne Torch II, a division operation that allows us to disrupt the -- (inaudible) -- so we can secure more populations with the ground forces. The last point I'd make in the opening statement is it has been a challenging period.

We're just over a hundred days here -- brutal, hot summer, spartan living conditions as we build these new patrol bases as part of the surge brigade, and candidly a determined enemy. Al Qaeda: They build IEDs here that are formidable, the deep-buried IEDs using the homemade explosives.

But throughout it all, the American soldier flow -- it's just amazing to see what some of these young kids have been able to do. And they see they're making a difference and they believe in their mission. So it's going okay. We look forward to the -- continuing our progress here.

And with that, I'll take your questions.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir, thank you very much.

Andrew Lubin, you were first online.

Q Hey, Colonel, Andrew Lubin again from U.S. Cavalry ON Point. Great listening to you, sir.

You're down by the -- close to the border with Anbar province. Are you -- you and General Mustafa and your -- and the fellow Sunnis receiving any support and any advice from the Sons of Anbar and from Sheikh Sattar's organizations?

LT. COL. ADGIE: I'd ask the moderator to repeat that question. He came in pretty broken.

MR. HOLT: Yes, he said -- he had mentioned that -- he said that you guys are down close to Anbar. Have you been receiving any help or advice from the Sunnis and the folks in Anbar, part of Sheikh Sattar's organization?

LT. COL. ADGIE: We have not received any direct support that I'm aware of. The concerned citizens -- the original name that they tied -- they called it the Arab Jabour Awakening, which is a direct lift from what happened at Al Anbar. Through the tribal channels, I know they've had some communication with some Arab Jabour tribe members there, really just cross-talking more than support. I know with Sheikh Sattar's death recently, that was -- that made them in my opinion more determined to continue to push what he started. So I would say not any direct assistance, but definitely the moral support and the guidance and informal guidance on how they can do it to be successful. And I'd probably say that'd be fair and accurate. Q Great, thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

And Bruce. Bruce McQuain, you still with us?

Q Yeah, here we go. Yeah, I had to pull -- I'm on the road, so I had to pull my earplug so I could get in here and you could hear me.

Three questions. Are the concerned citizens yet on the payroll of the Iraqi government? Secondly are you getting any PRT support where you are? And

last but not least, obviously this is an intelligence-driven operation. How do you vet your intelligence before you take action?

LT. COL. ADGIE: Okay, those are three good questions.

The concerned citizens -- we just went through the -- the short answer is no, they're not on the ISF or government of Iraq payroll yet. They are still being paid by CERP funds, which -- we just signed our second contract with General Mustafa this morning.

The first one was for a 60-day period, that carries through this fiscal year, and we just signed a new one today.

One of the things that Lieutenant General Abboud wants to do is to build a police station so we can have police trained through the IPs and then they become part of the GOI payroll. We are hopeful that that will take place, but we don't know if it will or not. So right now they're being paid by CERP funds.

The second question about the PRT?

Q Yeah.

LT. COL. ADGIE: We have not had a PRT at the -- PRTs are at brigade level. We have not had the EPRTs yet in 2nd Brigade, 3rd ID. We are scheduled to receive our PRT within the next couple days. The State Department guy is arriving with his team this weekend. They're going to do some training up in Baghdad and interface with the State Department folks, and then they'll be down early next week is what we anticipate. And then it will probably take them a few days to get their legs on the ground.

That's hugely important, hugely important, because that helps us navigate some fairly complex tasks. So we've been asking -- I personally have been working with the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain because they're in charge at the "qadha" level in the area that we fall under. And they're incredible because they know governance, and we're just amateurs at it. So the PRT for our brigades are hugely important.

And the last piece, about intel. Again, a great question. The way it works around here, we really have two systems or two groups of folks. One is the concerned citizens, and they are great local men who secure infrastructure. They're standing on the street corner or at the water pump station wearing a road guard vest and carrying an AK-47. We go through the vetting, the biometric data, called the BAT system, or we have passed those names -- we vet them, see if they have any negative reporting on them, then we pass those names to the Ministry of the Interior. But that is concerned citizens.

We also have a small core, four or five guys, of the most trusted agents, most trusted sons of -- or family members of some of the folks here, and they actually live with us on our FOB. They kind of look like interpreters, dressed in ACUs and Kevlar and their body armor. And they provide us a quantity of intelligence that is amazing through our subsurface network.

Now, that's not where it ends. We always have to use a second source to verify what they're telling us. What it normally looks like is some sort of ISR with -- to confirm what they tell us is happening on the ground. A UAV flies over, Army aviation -- fixed-wing aviation is saying, "Yes, I see these 12

guys in a palm grove." What it does is it allows us to take that big needle in a haystack and make it a much smaller haystack. So it helps us focus our ISR. And then we can use, you know, U.S. forces on the ground.

But the most important piece is, you know, picking the right guy. And we just don't swoop people off the street. Our guys -- we call them bird dogs, a term of affection, that tells us where to go hunting for the guy you're after.

They help us find the guy we're looking for. If there's 10 guys in a house and one's bad, they can say that's the guy you want, and that's the guy we take off the objective, and the others are like, "Yup, he's a bad guy," but we leave the rest of the family there. So we definitely have a coalition second source of intel before we move on something.

Q Thanks.

LT. COL. ADGIE: Over.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. And Charlie Quidnunc.

Charlie?

Q Yes, thank you. Some in Congress have suggested that we withdraw more American troops and change our mission from securing the population to counterterrorism. Could we fight al Qaeda without securing the citizens?

LT. COL. ADGIE: Okay. For the moderator, I got most of that, but I didn't get the second half, which, I think, was the question. Could you repeat it for me, please?

Q Well, could we fight al Qaeda without securing the citizens?
(Short pause.)

MR. HOLT: Okay. His question was: Could we fight al Qaeda without securing the citizens?

LT. COL. ADGIE: Yeah, I'm sorry for that. It's just a bad connection. I heard troop surge, political debate and withdrawal, and then I heard securing the citizens. I didn't get the question. I'm sorry.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. He was -- he's asking that -- you know, in Congress there's been some debate about whether we should change the mission from fighting terrorism -- or --

Q No, from securing the citizens to fighting terrorists.

MR. HOLT: Right. From securing the citizens to fighting terrorism and focusing on the -- (word inaudible) -- for terrorism. But can we do that -- can we fight terrorism without securing the citizens? LT. COL. ADGIE: At the tactical level -- and that's kind of what I can be smart about, talk to you guys about -- I think they're intertwined. One of our core tasks is to secure the population because that is how we gain -- that's insurgency 101. That's how we gain information. And we've seen areas we've gone through where the population has not yet trusted us. They know there's an IED out there, and they're afraid to tell us, and we hit it. Areas where they trust us, as soon as an IED went in the ground, we had multiple people come up and say, "Hey, there's an IED over there."

So I think that securing the population is an absolute part of our fight against al Qaeda because they -- al Qaeda -- and I mentioned ultraviolence, what they've used to kill people, and it's just -- it boggles the mind how heartless these people are and how brutal. One of the young Iraqi guys who works for us, a bird dog, has had 41 people in his family killed. In one day outside a mosque, they killed 13 of his family, all of his brothers and like six cousins.

So the brutality is beyond belief. So if we don't secure the population, we're not going to be able to kill al Qaeda, kill the terrorists here. So I think -- I don't think at the tactical level here in Arab Jabour, I would say it -- they're entwined. Over.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Thank you very much.

And, Charlie, did you get that?

Q Yeah, I got it great. I can hear everything.

MR. HOLT: Okay, all right. Great.

Jarred.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for your time. A(n) excellent presentation. Could you talk a little bit more to the human aspects? You've kind of touched a little bit, but spend a little bit of time explaining not only the rationale, which we understand is that they kind of hate al Qaeda, but do they see the concerned citizens and the old awakening people a future for themselves in the security forces, in the police, in the army? Are they trying to get into the army? And what are the actual concrete steps as far as the training schedule to bring all of the 587 concerned citizens into a functioning governmental system?

LT. COL. ADGIE: Yeah, that's a good question. It's 538 right now. And the answer is yes, some want to join, but not all. And some just want to go back to be a farmer, and it's that kind of easy. But I know they can't pick up their farming tools again until they know their family's secure.

So right now out of the 538 -- and this number's a little soft -- but about 200 would like to become local police. They don't want to be police that are sent to Baghdad or Basra or Mosul; they want to be small-town cops to protect their area. Some also want to be Iraqi army, which they know they could be stationed anywhere. But most, probably above 50 percent, just want to go back to be farmers and laborers and schoolteachers and engineers.

A lot of the concerned citizens would not meet the screening requirements for the Iraqi army or the Iraqi police. Some of the screening requirements include you got to be able to read, and we are in an agrarian neighborhood here. It is all farm; there's no industry, and some of the guys cannot read. Doesn't make them a -- you know, he's still a brave man for standing his post as a concerned citizen, but he would not be able to pass.

Some of the concerned citizens are about 45, 50 years old. Again, it is 1776 militia time back in Boston, where, you know, everybody stood up. We have some concerned citizens that have a father and six sons out there. You know, General Mustafa has four children. His oldest is about 35; he's in it, and then

his youngest is a 6-year-old little guy named Muhammad (sp), and he's like our mascot. He's just a beautiful little child.

So it is -- some want to, but not all. Some will not make the screening requirements based on age or education level.

And they're okay with that because they want to grow their okra and their dates and to get back to the fields because that's what they know how to do.

So I hope I answered the question. But some do and some don't. And that's a personal decision, but right now they're pretty darn brave.

Over.

MR. HOLT: All right, Jarred. Have we got any follow-up questions?

Q I have one, if the colonel has time.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Colonel, Andrew Lubin again. Are you at a point yet where you can bring the PRTs on down, or is that -- they still coming down in the future?

LT. COL. ADGIE: The PRT? I hope so. Again, once the PRT gets on the grounds at the brigade level, I'm going to -- you know, we're going to wrap arms around him as much as we can. Right now we have nothing but a 12-man -- 10-man, two-womann, like, council, volunteer council. It's going to meet for the first time Sunday morning at 9:00 Baghdad time. And it's the first time we're going to get together and say, okay, here it is.

And they're really stepping out, because our -- the previous council two years ago, they had five people on it, four of them were killed, the other guy took off; "I'm outta here." So again, very brave people in what they're trying to do. And they're a great cross-section of the population. So the PRT helping us understand the governance is hugely important.

An example of how we're kind of reaching across boundaries -- we went to the "qadha," which is a county council meeting. And the Shi'a council chair, we -- I had an opportunity to have a one-on-one sitdown with him. And he's, like, "I've heard about what's going on in Arab Jabour, I want to come down and meet him and see how I can help." So there's definitely reaching across sectarian lines.

And I think the PRT, which is hugely important, will help us interface with -- at these different levels to help us navigate the process. Because there is a -- just like our government, there is a bureaucratic process to get things done. And we are so far behind and disconnected, we're going to have to attack it on multiple levels. So PRT is going to be hugely important to help us do this.

Over.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. And just to make sure we're all on the same sheet of music here, when you were referring to CERP funds earlier, those are the Commanders Emergency Relief funds?

(Short audio break.)

LT. COL. ADGIE: (In progress following audio break) -- water pump stations, electrical stations.

That is how they are being paid, through CERP funding. Security of critical infrastructure.

Over.

MR. HOLT: Okay, yes, sir. I was just looking for the definition of the CERP funds.

(Pause.)

LT. COL. ADGIE: Yeah. Was that a follow-up question?

MR. HOLT: Yes, sir. Yeah. We were -- what I was looking for was what exactly is CERP funds

(Pause.)

LT. COL. ADGIE: All right. I believe we lost you a little bit. Yes, we're using CERP funds to secure critical infrastructure with the concerned citizens. I can't speak for all the other divisions, but --

MR. HOLT: Okay, not a problem, sir. We were -- my basic -- well, I'll try this one more time. Our connection seems to be pretty bad. What we're -- what I was looking for was, what exactly are CERP funds, the Commanders Emergency Relief --

LT. COL. ADGIE: What are exactly CERP funds?

Q Yes, sir.

LT. COL. ADGIE: That's -- yeah, Commanders Emergency Relief -- I don't know -- I can't remember what the "P" stands -- Program. And that is money allocated for projects. We have a CERP project that is going to put a new fuel tank into one of our pump stations. About a \$10,000 project. It is money used for the benefit of the Iraqis to help jumpstart either the economy or essential services or things along those lines.

It is not used for coalition forces, U.S. soldiers. It is used for the Iraqis. And, you know, we get Iraqi contractors to do the work. And that's kind of where the concerned citizens fall in.

Over. MR. HOLT: All right, sir, we got that one.

And we're about out of time here. Do you have any following -- or last -- closing statements? That's what I'm looking for. Do you have a closing statement, sir?

LT. COL. ADGIE: Closing statements. One, I just want to say thank you. You guys definitely add -- add to the information that folks back home can resource about what's going on over here. So I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you today.

And the most important thing to close with is, it's going okay over here. It's going pretty good. There's a lot of brave Iraqis who kind of see the way ahead and are not getting bogged down in a lot of the things we read in newspapers and talk about in the -- back in DC.

So it's going pretty good. The soldiers here are doing wonderful. We know this is going to be a long, hard 15 months, and it has not been free. You know, and our thoughts and prayers go out to those families of those who have lost loved ones.

But you know, the American soldiers -- you should be very proud of what these young men and women are doing every day. And al Qaeda's losing. I'll close on that. Al Qaeda's losing right now, and that's a good thing for the Iraqi people. Over.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir, thank you very much. And Lieutenant Colonel Ken Adgie, the commander, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 30th Infantry Division, working in Multinational Division Center, thank you very much for being with us today. And hopefully we can speak again here in a few weeks and see how things are going.

LT. COL. ADGIE: I would love to. I would love to talk to you guys again. Everybody take care of themselves and hopefully in a few weeks, we will get back together.

END.